

REPORT

Regional Planning Conference,
co-sponsored by Action for
Life, Animal Rights
Mobilization, and Animal
Rights Network
March 12-14, 1982
Washington, D.C.

The principal purpose of the Regional Planning Conference held March 12-14 at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. was to give participants in the various task forces formed at the Action for Life Conference last July (see E&A II/3) and the Mobilization for Animal Rights Conference last October (see E&A II/4) the opportunity to get together to discuss progress to date, compare notes, and plan further strategy. The whole of the third day of the conference was accordingly devoted to meetings of these task forces, the AFL groups (alternative diets, farm animals, wildlife, humane education, language, and religion) meeting in the morning, the ARM groups (media, animals in politics, bloodsports) meeting in the afternoon. Mobilization for Animals, formerly the ARM task force on laboratory experimentation, now incorporated as an independent entity (see E&A III/1) also met during the afternoon.

In addition to these valuable, work-oriented meetings, there was time allotted at this conference for some sessions for which there was no opportunity at the previous conferences. In these sessions participants had the chance to communicate informally with one another about strategy, and to report on their various campaigns on behalf of animals. These project and activity reports included: an update by Nellie Shriver, of American Vegetarians, on the progress of the international Boycott Burger King

campaign, and the effort to convince major food chains to provide alternative vegetarian options; a report by Daryl Elliot on the current status of the ARM coalition; an account by Sheila Schwartz of the humane education task force's college outreach effort; a report by George P. Cave on Trans-Species Unlimited's campaign to ban the decompression chamber in Pennsylvania; an account by Lia Albo of the Fund for Animals' effort to halt rabbit clubbing in Idaho; an update by Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco of PETA on the status of seventeen monkeys removed last September from the Institute of Behavioral Research under Maryland cruelty laws; and a report by Holly Jensen of the effort to outlaw pound seizure in Florida.

The conference also included a "Personal Development and Public Persuasion Workshop" directed by Alex Hershaft of the Vegetarian Information Service, in which a philosophically interesting, ideological conflict emerged concerning the strategic relation of radical vs. reformist politics. Tom Hartman, director of Salem Children's Trust, in speaking of effective techniques of persuasion, gave as an example of a successful strategy for reducing animal suffering the appeal to the profit motive in trying to convince fast food establishments to introduce salad bars, the idea being that this might reduce the level of meat consumption by patrons and even encourage vegetarianism.

Tom McNichol and other members of Trans-Species Unlimited objected vigorously to this approach, claiming that such reforms undermine the true goals of the animal rights movement, by appealing to the very economic motives which are ingrained in the institutional structures of a capitalist society and are ultimately responsible for animal abuse, and by directly supporting businesses whose survival depends almost exclusively on the exploitation

and slaughter of animals. According to McNicol, no effort should be spared to promote, for the short run, reforms which relieve animal suffering, but only so long as such measures in no way interfere with, or run

counter to, the ultimate goal of completely liberating non-human animals from man's tyranny and oppression.

George P. Cave, President
Trans-Species Unlimited